LIVING TOGETHER

up man; but his child bride was unable to take her place as his wife for some three years more. To keep her son away from eloping with a young woman, E. R. not only tolerated but encouraged—some people say she actually brought it about—Y.'s liaison with a woman of the same caste living in the neighbourhood. For three or four years everything went on well and the relations between the mother and child were most cordial. Trouble started when Y.'s wife came to live with them. E. R. had expected that her son's amours with the other woman would end shortly. In this she was wrong. The young wife failed to win the affection of her husband, who remained deeply attached to his former mistress. E. R. could not tolerate this. She tried different methods to dissuade her son, and with every failure her relations with him were more embittered. Quarrels between them became frequent. Tired of the incessant flow of criticism and bitter remarks from her, one day Y. struck her—with fists first and later with a stick. He also perhaps pulled her hair. All this happened so suddenly, and E. R.'s husband was at the time so overcome that he found himself helpless and could not intervene in the matter. Infuriated by this E. R. ran into the street and started wailing and cursing loudly. Very soon this attracted a large crowd. Her husband tried to pacify her, but E. R. would not let him come near her. She said to him, 'You claim to be a man! Do you? You could see your son beating me in your very presence and did not lift even your little finger. For me you are dead. Go, go away—for me you are dead. Did you hear that?' Saying this she started breaking her glass bangles. This was quite serious for a Hindu woman breaks her bangles only when she is widowed. The crowd tried to pacify her. Sympathizers made efforts to find out what the matter was. For over an hour E. R. continued cursing her son and husband, spitting 'at their name' and throwing dust, signifying their burial. Then she gave a detailed and rather exaggerated account of the happenings of that evening. Three elders who were present at the spot immediately summoned the son and asked him to touch the feet of his mother and apologize to her. This he did readily, although with a sullen face. But E. R. reacted with another spurt of abuse and foul language. After a while people took them home. The gravity of the matter demanded its consideration by the full village council. Once again the son had to apologize to the mother, and in addition had to pay a small fine for his unbecoming behaviour.